

Dear Ms. Kurth,

My name is Francisco Granados and I retired from the Tucson Fire Department after 30 years of service in 2011. I have been a patient of Dr. Randall Prust for about 10 years, but I have been living with pain from work-related injuries for over 20 years. Dr. Prust was the key to me being able to finish my career with Tucson Fire. I have injuries to both my knees and back that have made working and day-to-day life difficult. Dr. Prust helped to minimize my lower back pain which radiates to my left foot through my quadracept and calve, and having access to medication through him has been a vital component of my recovery.

Over the years, my interactions with the Industrial Commission of Arizona (ICA) have been fraught with difficulty. There's a chance that I never would have needed to see Dr. Prust had it not been for the neurosurgeons that ICA set me to for herniated disk back in 1998. At the time, I was told that 98% of these herniations take care of themselves. I continued to work, and eighteen months later, the herniations had not healed. I could no longer tolerate the excruciating back pain, so I had to have my first surgery. During the operation, the surgeon cut me twice because he could not get into the area to remove the disk material. I had two surgical incisions that needed to heal instead of one. I went back to full duty two months after surgery, but I continued to have nerve pain radiation down the left side of my leg.

I have had a work-related knee injury that was authorized for surgery in 2009 denied when I opted to wait for the surgery since my son was graduating from the Tucson Fire Academy. When I asked to reopen the claim, I was denied. This was shocking and disappointing, to say the least.

I receive epidurals for a work-related back injury, but even those have been reduced by ICA. In the past, I was allowed eight epidurals per year; now I am only allowed six. The epidurals help with chronic back pain, muscle cramps, and help with the neuropathy; they make day-to-day life more manageable. I have also been denied acupuncture, which is something that may have helped me manage the pain.

My most persistent and troubling issue with ICA has been in trying to obtain medication. During these first 20 years, I had nothing but trouble obtaining my medications through ICA at the local pharmacies. I worked 10 miles from my pharmacy and, working a 24-hour shift, could not leave work to pick up prescriptions. Being able to obtain my necessary medications after my epidurals from Rincon Pain Management has been a God send. I am not sure why ICA wants to make it difficult for public safety workers like myself to obtain deserved treatment and care. It is hurtful to be a public servant and have an agency that is supposed to support you, work against your best interest. I could tell you many more stories about negative interactions with ICA and I just wish that other public safety personnel and my 30 years of dedicated service would be rewarded with the care and compassion that we deserve.